pubic-hair when her child reaches puberty. To drink coconuts opened at the bottom instead of pierced at the top will give her baby an abnormally large mouth. Commenting about, or criticising a person who has any physical defect will result in the child's being born with the same abnormality. Finally, it is dangerous for her to occupy any one position for a length of time, such as sitting upright for a long time or standing bent over her work. If she is not careful about this, she will suffer from abnormally hard labour. 843

BIRTH

The birth of a first-born child is a more important occasion than the birth of subsequent children. For the first-born, the father prepares a big feast when labour begins. He sends for the wife's mother to announce the event and all eat together. Both the mother's mother and the father's mother prepare special pandanus plaited mats and on these the child is placed immediately after birth. The other customs surrounding birth are similar for all infants. 844 (574)

Birth takes place within the house. A partition of bark cloth is hung from the rafters to divide the house into the family section and the mother's section. Plenty of soft mats are placed on the floor of the mother's part of the house. The mother's mother and the father's mother together with an expert medicine-man attend the mother. She sits on her mother's lap. The mother massages the back of the parturient and exerts pressure during labour pains. The medical expert sits in front of the parturient urging her to bear down with all her strength as the labour pains increase. He takes the baby with his hands as it is born, sucks the baby's nostrils to clear them of mucous, then turns the baby over on his hand and slaps it vigorously on the back to give it strength. The baby is placed on a bed of white bark cloth next to the mother. A wide band of bark cloth is wound round the mother's waist to give her support, and pressure is exerted until the afterbirth comes away. Cups of cold water are given to the mother to drink. The medicine-man ties the cord with a thread of cotton and places it against a bark cloth beater if the infant is a girl, before cutting the cord with a pair of scissors. If the infant is a boy, the cord is cut resting on a garden hoe. As the cord is snipped, the (593) (606) (759) (759)

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In short, a man and wife will seek to establish their own household as soon as they can, wherever it might be. The proof of this is that in Motulahi, where there were 150 married couples, I found only two multiple-family households in which both the family unit of the head of the household and the subordinate family unit could be viable on their own. In both cases, the link between the family groups was between parents and son, and it should be noted that one of these households was headed by the village noble, and the other by the man who was next highest on the traditional scale of rank. Both were among the five men who were by far the richest in the village (the three other men did not have adult children). In other words, it is possible that their fathers' special positions may account for why the sons lived in extended family households when they could have afforded to set up house on their own.

In addition, there were some multiple-family households in which one family unit in the household could be economically independent, while the other(s) would not be viable. In such cases, it is clear why the dependent family unit is a member of an extended household. As for the self-sufficient family unit, the extension of the household is a matter of prestige, quite aside from any question of sentiment or obligation, for the larger a household (measured especially in terms of adult dependents), the greater the authority of the head. This authority applies not only within the household but also beyond it, since the head of a large household controls more labor for community enterprises than do other heads of households.

Thus, a couple will make an effort first to establish their own household. Once they have succeeded in this, they will try to attract other people to join their household (provided they are capable of supporting dependents). Against this, however, others will be seeking to establish households of their own, and this puts a limit on the ability to attract and retain dependents.

We are now in a position to understand what lies behind the statement that was made earlier in this paper: that there is no consensus among Tongans on what composition constitutes the ideal household. An older man may say that the ideal household is a three-generation household headed by the senior members, while a young man is unlikely to make such a statement. However, as mentioned earlier, both would agree that the ideal household is one in which I, the speaker, am in a position to be the head.

If a family unit is not able to be independent, an older couple or older individual generally prefers to move in with their daughter or other female relative, who is more likely to be welcoming and will take better care of them than their son's wife would. Among younger couples who are not able to be independent, a woman prefers to be in a

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household with her parents or other relatives, while a man prefers to bring his family to live with his parents or other relatives. The matter is usually settled by factors other than these considerations, however: mainly, where it is (which island and village) that they need or wish to be located, and which of the relatives is capable of having them. In other words, factors other than the simple elements of kinship relationships usually determine the location and composition of the household in which people live.

Where there is an equal possibility of living in a household with the wife's or the husband's relatives, the choice primarily reflects the quality of relationships between the husband and the wife and between the wife and her in-laws. To live in the household of one's in-laws is a difficult situation, difficult in different ways for a man and a woman. A woman is far more involved in domestic activities than a man. Thus, when a couple moves in with the wife's people, the husband may well feel that he has little useful place as a stranger in the household—which is not the situation when a woman is living with her husband's people. On the other hand, precisely because of the greater interaction, the wife is constantly exposed to the critical view of her husband's relatives. Ideally, a woman should agree to live where her husband's people are, whether in their household or in a separate household in their village. And indeed, most new households are established by local men—that is, the man and wife set up their own household in the husband's village, since a man generally has more chance of being allocated a residential plot in his parents' village, where he is known and where his kin can exert pressure and assist him in acquiring land in his own name. At the very least, if they are not successful in getting him his own residential plot, he might set up his own household on his parents' land.

If a young couple does not have the means to establish and maintain a household, they almost inevitably reside at first in a common household with the husband's people. At this time, the young wife is under constant scrutiny and must act as demurely as possible. She usually goes home to her parents for the birth of the first child, however, and often stays there for a few weeks or months, ostensibly so that her mother can help her in taking care of the baby. Usually, her husband comes with her, or is at her parents' home for part of the period, moving back and forth between his people and hers. They may move back to live with his people, but at each birth she has the excuse of moving to her parents' home, taking the children with her and going for a few months before the birth and staying for a few months after. Eventually, if they do not establish their own household, they may, in the end, remain with the wife's people. (This is especially likely if the husband has no expectation of inheriting an agricultural allotment, since that

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would have provided a material basis for establishing their own household someday.) Many of the three-generation households that are based on the parents-daughter link between family units evolved in this way, even though such a household is in many respects far from the cultural ideal.

DISCUSSION: OPTIONS AND OPTATION

It has been my argument that household composition in Tonga is to be accounted for not as the expression of norms regarding kinship, but rather as the outcome of individuals' pursuit of prestige within the limitations of their social position and the resources available to them.[14] This is a dynamic process; as their needs and resources change, people are able to shift their household arrangements. Thus the patterning of household composition in Tonga is better regarded "as the statistical outcome of multiple individual choices rather than a direct reflection of jural rules" (Leach 1960:124).

Keesing (1967) has pointed out, however, that statistical description is difficult when variations in composition are extreme (a problem that was noted early in this paper), and that statistical outcomes themselves may vary widely under differing conditions (another point that applies to the statistical description of household composition in Tonga). He argues further that a model of the principles whereby decisions are made is more revealing than a statistical model, as well as being more powerful in accounting for the range of empirical data. A recent review article, which describes this approach as "the analysis of social structure in terms of the options open to members of a society," concludes that "decision models provide a new and convincing way to think about social structural variability" (Quinn 1975:22, 43).[15]

In this paper, I have presented a description of the processes of household formation in Tonga and the dynamics of fluctuations in household membership. The description specifies the criteria that enable us to predict whether a couple or individual are likely to establish a household of which he and/or she would be the head. More importantly, it provides an explanation that accounts retrodictively for

14 Of course, not only norms regarding kinship, but also the pursuit of prestige and the nature of the limitations upon it, are culturally conditioned.

15 Except for reservations regarding the meaning of terms like "alternative courses" and "decisions," I would follow Keesing (1967) in conceiving "decision model" to denote "an ethnographic description that is actor-oriented and based on the categories of the culture under study," and whose minimal properties are

> . . . that it (1) defines the situation or context in a culturally meaningful way; (2) defines the range of culturally acceptable alternative courses of action in the situation; and provides either (3) a set of rules for making appropriate decisions under culturally possible combinations of circumstances, i.e., a model with determinate outcomes, or (4) a set of strategies for deciding among alternatives, i.e., a value-maximization model (Keesing 1967:2).